

**Remarks Following a Briefing by the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization and an Exchange With Reporters**

*March 11, 2006*

**The President.** Good morning. I want to thank General Meigs for being here to brief me about tactics on the ground in Iraq. One of the things that the Secretary and General Pace are constantly doing is briefing the Commander in Chief as to the nature of the enemy, what the enemy is trying to do to shake our will, and how we're adjusting, how we're constantly adapting our tactics on the ground to achieve a victory.

We face an enemy that will use explosive devices in order to shake our will; in order to foment violence in Iraq; in order to try to convince the American people that we can't win in Iraq. That's what they're trying to do. And the general has spent a lot of time thinking about the enemy's tactics and techniques, and how our military can adjust to them.

So the briefing today was a series of briefing I get from our commanders on the ground, as well as our experts hired by the Pentagon to let me know what we're doing, so I can let the American people know that we recognize the nature of this enemy. We're adjusting our tactics to defeat this enemy for the sake of peace, for the sake of the security of the United States of America, and for the sake of peace in the world.

And so, General, thank you for being here. I appreciate your time. I'll answer a couple of questions. Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press].

**Former Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy Claude Allen**

**Q.** Mr. President, can you tell us your reaction to the arrest of your former Domestic Policy Adviser, Claude Allen?

**The President.** If the allegations are true, Claude Allen did not tell my Chief of Staff and legal counsel the truth, and that's deeply disappointing. If the allegations are true, something went wrong in Claude Allen's life, and that is really sad. When I heard the story last night, I was shocked. And my first reaction was one of disappointment, deep dis-

appointment that—if it's true—that we were not fully informed. But it was also one—shortly thereafter, I felt really sad for the Allen family.

Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters].

**Republican Party/Dubai Ports World**

**Q.** Sir, are you concerned about the rift that the Dubai Ports deal has opened within your own party?

**The President.** The Republican Party is united in our efforts to win the war on terror. The Republican Party is united in our efforts to keep this economy strong by keeping taxes low. The Republican Party is united in making us less dependent on foreign sources of oil.

I've read all the stories about this rift or that rift. That's typical Washington, it seems like to me. I am looking forward to continuing to work with the leadership in the United States Congress to pass an agenda that will keep America the economic leader of the world and will keep this country secure. And next fall, I'm looking forward to campaigning with our candidates. I'm convinced ours is the party that has got an agenda for the future, and ours is the party that has performed.

Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

**Progress in Iraq**

**Q.** Mr. President, are you concerned, with reference to the IEDs, are you concerned that the sophisticated weaponry our troops are facing now might be coming from foreign, neighboring countries? And if so, what are our courses going about—

**The President.** We're constantly gathering intelligence. We're monitoring influence. We are adjusting our tactics. We are—obviously, if there's any kind of influence from a foreign country that is disruptive, any kind of influence—if the Iranians are trying to influence the outcome of the political process or the outcome of the security situation there, we're letting them know our displeasure.

Our call is for those in the neighborhood to allow Iran—Iraq to develop a democracy. And that includes our call to Iran as well as to Syria. We have made our concerns known, and we will continue to make our concerns

known. It's in the interests of the neighborhood that Iraq develop to be a peaceful democracy. It's important for countries to have stable, peaceful, prosperous countries on their border. Prosperity in one nation will help prosperity in other nations. It's important for our friends in the rest of the Middle East to help this new democracy.

And so, yes, we're interested in negative influence; we're also interested in positive influence. And we call on people to be a positive influence, to help this new democracy emerge. And I'm optimistic that the Iraqi people will overcome the challenges they face.

And my optimism is based upon reality on the ground. One, there were some people trying to, obviously, foment sectarian violence. Some have called it a civil war. But it didn't work. Secondly, I'm optimistic because the Iraqi security forces performed, in most cases, really well to provide security. All but two of the provinces of Iraq, after the blowing up of the mosque, were settled. I'm positive and optimistic about the development that the Iraqi security forces are achieving.

I know we've got to do more work in the police forces; we have said that very clearly. General Casey has called the year 2006, the year of police training, and we'll continue to work to train the police. I'm optimistic that the leadership recognizes that a sectarian violence will undermine the capacity for them to self govern. I believe we'll have a unity government in place that will help move the process forward. I fully recognize that the nature of the enemy is such that they want to convince the world that we cannot succeed in Iraq. I know we're going to succeed if we don't lose our will.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:46 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Montgomery C. Meigs, director, Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization; and Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

## **The President's Radio Address**

*March 11, 2006*

Good morning. This month will mark the 3-year anniversary of the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, which liberated Iraq from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein. As this milestone approaches, I will be giving a series of speeches to update the American people on our strategy for victory in Iraq. I will discuss the progress we are making, the lessons we've learned from our experiences, and how we're fixing what has not worked.

On Monday I will give the first of these speeches, focusing on the security element of our strategy, the task of defeating the terrorists and training Iraqi security forces so they can take the lead in the fight and defend their own democracy.

The Iraqi security forces have made great strides in the past year, and they performed well after the recent bombing of the Golden Mosque of Samarra. This mosque is one of Shi'a Islam's holiest sites, and after it was bombed, bands of armed militia began exacting revenge with reprisal attacks on Sunni mosques and random violence that took the lives of hundreds of innocent Iraqis.

Immediately after the attack, Iraq's leaders came together and acted to restore calm and end the violence. They deployed Iraqi security forces to Baghdad and other areas threatened by violence. These forces moved rapidly and effectively to protect religious sites, enforce a curfew, and reestablish civil order where necessary. We commend them for their good work.

The situation in Iraq is still tense. Reports of kidnappings and executions are being taken very seriously. The Iraqi Government has made clear that such violent attacks cannot be tolerated. The vast majority of Iraqis have shown they want a future of freedom and peace.

By their response over the past 2 weeks and their participation in three successful elections last year, the Iraqi people have made clear they will not let a violent minority take that future away by tearing the country apart. And the Iraqi security forces have shown that they are capable of rising above sectarian divisions to protect the unity of a free Iraq.